



# Wilderness

## A Fact Sheet

### Definition from the Wilderness Act

"A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value."

### National Wilderness Preservation System

Established – **1964** (by the Wilderness Act)

Size in 1964 – **9.1 million acres**

Size as of 2004 – **105,678,911** (approximately 4% of U.S.A.)

Number of wilderness areas as of 2004 – **662**

Amount of wilderness in Alaska – **58,182,216 acres**

States with no wilderness areas – **Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Rhode Island**

Largest wilderness area – located in **Wrangell-St. Elias National Park**, Alaska,  
9,078,675 acres

Smallest wilderness area – located in **Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge**, Florida,  
5 acres

First Department of Interior designated wilderness area – **Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge**, New Jersey in 1968

Federal agencies that manage wilderness – **National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Federal agency that manages the most wilderness – **National Park Service** (42%)

### National Park Service Wilderness (as of 2004)

Total NPS designated wilderness – **43,602,713 acres**

Percent of NPS land that is designated wilderness – **nearly 53%**

Number of National Park units with designated wilderness – **46**

Number of National Park units with proposed or recommended wilderness – **39**

Smallest NPS wilderness area – **Ansel Adams Wilderness Area** located in Devils Postpile  
National Monument, 747 acres

First NPS wilderness areas – located in Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve  
and Petrified Forest National Park